FINDER

NRL's Electronic Warfare Division worked with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and General Atomics to develop the first tandem unmanned air vehicle (UAV) system in the USAF inventory as part of the CP2 ACTD for the European Command. The FINDER UAV is carried on a wing pylon of a specially modified USAF Predator UAV, then released remotely to descend to a low level and collect samples of a plume that systems aboard the Predator have indicated may contain chemical weapons agents. Under human supervision at the Predator Ground Control Station (GCS), the two UAVs then cooperate to track the plume and gather meteorological and chemical data that is used to predict the plume's path and resulting threatened areas. After completing the mission, the FINDER follows Predator to a designated recovery site, where FINDER autolands to be recovered by friendly forces. Since the initial deployments in June 2002, FINDER has deployed 18 times from the host Predator and more than a dozen times using a ground launch system. At present, maximum endurance of an operating system has been demonstrated to be 6.5 hours. A current development effort is geared toward integrating a real-time high fidelity ISR capability to support targeting.

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